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Chairman: Mr. Wenaweser. (Liechtenstein)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 97: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/57/115)

Agenda item 98: Social development, including questions related to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (A/57/3, A/57/139 and A/57/139.Corr.1, A/57/352, A/57.67-E/2002/45, A/57/218 and A/57/218.Corr.1; E/CN.5/2002/2 and A/C.3/57/L.6)

Agenda item 99: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/57/93)

Introductory statements, dialogue with representatives and general debate

1. **Mr. Scholvinck** (Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development) reiterated what he had earlier told the Commission for Social Development, namely, that the goals of the Millennium Summit were primarily social ones, such as the elimination of poverty and hunger. Unfortunately, some of the items before the Third Committee, such as elimination of poverty, culture, and the follow-up of the implementation of the outcome of major United Nations conferences, had been moved to the Second Committee, and others, such as humanitarian assistance, were being considered in the plenary Assembly. Those shifts shed light on the attention paid to questions of social development compared with questions of economic policy. Economic questions had to do with means, whereas social questions had to do with ends, which tended to be long-term development goals. Although it was evident that the ends could not be achieved without the means, too much attention to means could result in losing sight of the ends. The Committee should not lose sight of the goal.

2. With regard to agenda item 97, he drew the Committee's attention to the conclusion reached in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/115, para. 59), namely, that the core issues addressed at the World Summit for Social Development — the eradication of poverty, the promotion of productive employment and the enhancement of social integration — had largely been incorporated in the agendas of most United

Nations meetings, in government policies and programmes and in the work programmes of the United Nations system. Achieving social development for all, however, required more than fulfilling development goals: it also implied qualitative achievements, including increased participation, greater social justice and improved equity in societies.

3. With respect to agenda item 98, he wished to give particular emphasis to the role of the family. The tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, which would be observed in 2004, would reaffirm the importance of long-term measures to protect the social function and the development of the family; promote a global approach to social questions, the family, family members and communities, as well as society as a whole; and strengthen the cooperation begun in 1994 for the promotion of cooperative interaction and substantive contributions by local, national and international organizations, the United Nations system, the private sector, the research institutes, the communications media throughout the world, and national participants in the dialogue.

4. With respect to agenda item 99, he said that neither in the General Assembly nor in any other forum had due attention been paid to the Second World Assembly on Ageing or to the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing. And yet, that document was unique in that for the first time questions related to ageing and to older persons had been incorporated in a development programme.

5. **Ms. Bah Diallo** (Deputy Assistant Director-General for Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) introduced the Plan of Action of the United Nations Literacy Decade (A/57/218) and recalled that there were currently 550 million illiterate women and 300 million illiterate men, as well as 100 million illiterate children (60 per cent of whom were girls) who had no access to primary school. That situation was unacceptable.

6. Literacy was a universal right and an important instrument for the attainment of other development goals, such as the right to education, gender equality, the creation of democratic societies, poverty reduction, environmental protection and HIV/AIDS prevention. For that reason, literacy programmes and policies should not be limited to dispensing the necessary skills for reading, writing and arithmetic or merely educating

children. Literacy was an essential prerequisite for participation in social, cultural, political and economic activities. The United Nations Literacy Decade was not an isolated, or parallel initiative but an integral part of education for all. Consequently, all persons, governments and communities, as well as the private sector and civil society, should be mobilized and should take the necessary measures.

7. The principal goal of the United Nations Literacy Decade was to encourage Governments and civil societies to provide academic and non-academic educational opportunities to children, young people and adults, and to allocate financial resources to education for all. The detailed draft plan of action emphasized the political conditions and operational requirements necessary for the formulation of supportive policies and the enactment of the necessary legislative measures. In conjunction with other organizations, UNESCO would provide support for the activities set out in the Plan of Action. Literacy was a means, a right and a pleasure. Now more than ever the United Nations Literacy Decade was a necessity, since literacy was an instrument for creating a society devoted to the attainment of peace, democracy, social justice and general well-being.

8. **Ms. Eskjaer** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the Central and European countries associated with the European Union (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia) and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, and Iceland, a European Economic Area (EEA) country of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), said that the European Union was fully committed to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and to the attainment of the development goals it established, as well as to the commitments assumed at the major United Nations conferences.

9. Emphasizing the importance of the social component of development, she pointed out that it was one of the fundamental pillars of sustainable development, as expressed in the conclusions of recent United Nations conferences. The European Union welcomed the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development in Johannesburg. On that occasion, it had been agreed that the social dimension of sustainable development should be strengthened and better integrated. In addition, emphasis had been placed on the need to promote the incorporation of

sustainable development objectives in programmes and policies of bodies responsible for social issues. Stress had also been laid on the importance of the follow-up to the Summit, support for social protection systems, and the need to strike a balance between economic and social development and take care that they were mutually reinforcing. The European Union believed that gender and gender-specific policies were crucial for achieving women's full participation in society. Emphasis on such questions as the indivisibility of human dignity and the decision to give more attention to basic requirements such as clean water, sanitation, energy, health care, food security, job creation, protection of bio-diversity and elimination of child labour communicated a clear message: there could be no sustainable development without social development.

10. The International Conference on Financing for Development had highlighted the importance of good governance and human rights for the attainment of sustainable development. The European Union welcomed the establishment of the International Forum for Social Development and of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

11. At the fortieth session of the Commission for Social Development, while the European Union had joined the consensus on the agreed conclusions, it wished to express its disappointment that the conclusions had not added substantively to previous discussions and agreements on policy issues, and had not adopted a pro-active approach towards the integration of social and economic policies. In the view of the European Union, the Commission for Social Development should consider carefully how to improve the outcomes it negotiated. On the one hand, the European Union would welcome improvements in the Bureau's working methods, and on the other, it appreciated the decision to change the terms of office of Commission members. It would particularly appreciate further efforts to establish synergies as well as greater consistency with the work being done by the ILO on the social dimension of globalization.

12. It was important to make more effective use of the potential of the functional commissions in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Accordingly, working methods should be reviewed on a systematic basis, so as to identify best practices and

to promote more stimulating dialogue among the experts.

13. The European Union also welcomed the outcome of the series of high-level meetings of the Economic and Social Council on strengthening human resources, including the areas of health and education, and appreciated the consideration, by the Security Council, of issues that had previously been considered outside the scope of international peace and security, in particular the integral role of economic, social and humanitarian factors in preventing conflict and ensuring a rapid and sustainable post-conflict recovery.

14. The European Union welcomed the high priority given in the United Nations during the previous year to strengthening the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, particularly since it echoed the Union's own priorities. The Union had decided to proclaim 2003 as the European Year of Disabled Persons with the aim of raising awareness of their rights, helping to protect them from discrimination and enhancing the full enjoyment of their rights on a basis of equality.

15. She said she was gratified by the preliminary work done by the Ad Hoc Committee established under General Assembly resolution 56/168 of 19 December 2001 to consider proposals for a comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. The European Union was pleased by the report of the first session of the Ad Hoc Committee (A/57/357), and in particular, by the recommendations in the draft resolution contained in paragraph 16 of that report. The formulation of a new convention was not an alternative, but rather a necessary complement to that process. In addition, greater emphasis on the matter of disabilities within the international human rights system required a more systematic exchange of information, experience and ideas between the agencies and bodies of the United Nations.

16. The European Union applauded the decision of the Commission for Social Development to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Disabilities until the end of December 2005, in order to further the promotion and monitoring of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. That decision facilitated a multi-track approach to the development of a disability dimension in the United Nations human rights monitoring system,

which was of the utmost importance in incorporating mainstream disability as a human rights issue in the implementation of existing human rights conventions and in their monitoring mechanisms.

17. The European Union was doing all it could to incorporate the interests of young people in the planning, decision-making and implementation processes of the United Nations, which was fundamental in building a society for all ages. Since the agenda for the Commission for Social Development for 2003 was to include an item on youth, thought should be given to a more integrated and horizontal policy which would promote their participation. The results of the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children had provided solid ground for strengthening efforts to protect and promote the rights of children. The European Union looked forward with interest to the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in December 2003, and one of its priorities in that context would be to pay special attention to the issue of reconciling work and family life.

18. With regard to the International Year of Older Persons, the European Union warmly welcomed the consensus reached at the Second World Assembly on Ageing when the participants agreed on a broad range of issues relating to three priorities: the role of older persons in development, maintaining health and well-being in old age, and ensuring enabling and supportive environments. As follow-up to the Political Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing adopted in Madrid in September 2002, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Regional Ministerial Conference on Ageing had agreed on a regional implementation strategy, which would provide a framework for an effective response by member States to the challenges and opportunities confronting ageing persons, in harmony with the goals, objectives and commitments of the International Plan of Action.

19. The European Union would continue to promote sustainable social development and to combat poverty, as prerequisites for shaping globalization with a human face. The member States of the European Union, determined to further improve their social protection systems, undertook to continue the discussion on future social policies both within the Union and at the United Nations.

20. **Mr. Gronstad** (Norway) said that, during the previous 30 years, the Government of Norway had included youth representatives in its delegation to the General Assembly and had encouraged other nations to do the same. In that way, youth representatives could learn from each other and from other representatives, and promote greater understanding of young people and their views.

21. Many young people from all over the world were concerned about the application of the death penalty, which continued to be used by a great number of countries. It was even more deplorable that it was used against offenders who were under 18 at the time of the crime. Enforcing the death penalty against child offenders sent the wrong signal to young people about respect for life. It also implied that criminals could not improve or develop. Society, by accepting the imposition of the death penalty on child offenders, was wrongly implying that children could not be rehabilitated. The acknowledgement that young people were immature and could be rehabilitated accounted for the almost universal legal ban on the use of the death penalty against child offenders. Both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child contained provisions to that effect.

22. The young people of today cared about the state of the world. At their age, they had not yet become used to accepting the huge gap between the rich and the poor, war as a way of solving conflicts, exploitation of persons and of the environment, and the unequal distribution of power. Young people had not spent a very long time in the world, and therefore had ambitious dreams of the future, and of the ways it might be changed. They were sometimes called naive, but it was not naive to refuse to accept a situation that was wrong.

23. It was vital to listen to young people and to enlist their support to confront such scourges as HIV/AIDS and drug abuse. Young people knew what was important to other youngsters at risk, and how to reach them. Therefore, in addition to including youth representatives in country delegations to international bodies, young people should be given real power in their communities if international representation was to have the necessary effect. It was essential to encourage self-confidence in young people so that they could influence the development of democracy.

24. **Mr. Zhang** (China) referred to the attention the United Nations had paid to social issues since the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly on social development, and in particular, since the high-level meetings of the Economic and Social Council on how human resources development fostered the process of development, especially in the areas of health and education. China fully supported the proposals put forward and described in the Ministerial Declaration that had been adopted.

25. An important achievement of the United Nations in the social field was the growing attention given to vulnerable groups. The Second World Assembly on Ageing had provided the opportunity for an in-depth discussion on the subject, and had led to the adoption of the Madrid Political Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing. China hoped that the international community would take collective action to ensure the implementation of the follow-up of the Assembly, and thus translate the goal of a society for all ages into a reality. Noting that the first session of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities had been held in the month of July, he said that China hoped that all parties would work together to enable the Committee to enter into substantive negotiations on the draft Convention in order to finalize it at an early date.

26. The attainment of the goals of the Millennium Summit relating to poverty eradication and economic and social development required shared responsibilities on the part of all countries and extensive worldwide cooperation. Promoting multilateralism while strengthening international cooperation was of great importance in the context of globalization and the development of communication and information. For its part, China hoped that the United Nations would expand its role in that area and would redouble its efforts to achieve multilateral cooperation on social issues.

27. **Mr. Fahmy** (Egypt) said that social development had been of great importance to the international community since 1986, when the Declaration on the Right to Development had been adopted. Social development had been the main topic of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, and had been evident in the

decisions of the major United Nations conferences held during the past decade. The universal declarations and documents had confirmed that all persons were entitled to a social and international order in which their rights and freedoms could be fully realized. His delegation called for efforts to be made to achieve that end. It was necessary to recognize the cultural dimension of development as set out in the Copenhagen Declaration and to ensure respect for cultural and economic diversity among nations in the formulation and implementation of social development strategies. Since social development was a national responsibility, it could not be achieved without efficient international cooperation, taking into account the limitations and assistance needs of developing countries. A suitable international environment for the development of all countries was essential, and it was therefore important to ease the burden of developing countries, in particular the external debt as well as restrictions unjustifiably imposed on the transfer of technology and on accessibility of their products to international markets.

28. In addressing social development issues, mention should be made of a principle enunciated in the preamble and the substantive provisions of the Declaration on the Right to Development, namely, the right of all peoples to self-determination and to live free of all forms of foreign domination and occupation. That principle was also expressed in the Copenhagen Declaration and in the final document of the twenty-fourth Special Session of the General Assembly, which posited that the obstacles hindering the self-determination of peoples living under foreign occupation were hampering the economic and social development of those peoples.

29. No cause applied more aptly to those noble words on self-determination than that of the Palestinian people: their level of social development under the relentless Israeli occupation had hit bottom. The Israeli occupying forces were pursuing a policy of systematic destruction of all Palestinian facilities with the aim of destroying any hope the Palestinian people might have of achieving a minimum acceptable standard of living, let alone achieving social development. It was sufficient to mention the statistics contained in a United Nations report released on 29 August 2002: owing to the curfew imposed by Israel, unemployment had risen to 64 per cent among the Palestinians; the blockade policies imposed by Israel had pushed 70 per

cent of the Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip below the poverty line; losses to the Palestinian economy stood at 7.6 million dollars per day, amounting to a total of 3.3 billion since October 2002, when the Intifada began. According to reports from another reliable international organization, the gross value of Palestinian facilities, buildings and shelters destroyed by the Israeli forces amounted to a loss of 700 million dollars, while 300 million dollars had been lost in the agricultural sector alone.

30. It was therefore surprising to hear Israel decrying Palestinian "terrorism", and even more so to hear it claim to be an island of democracy and development in a sea of dictatorships and backwardness. According to the report mentioned earlier, the loss of income resulting from the Israeli policy of closure and restrictions far exceeded any assistance that the international community might provide. A continuation of the current situation could end in a human catastrophe. Israel must be ready to bear the social consequences of its policies in the region.

31. **Mr. Stagno** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that one of the key results of the World Summit for Social Development had been a recognition of the multidimensional nature of poverty as a global problem. The Rio Group believed that one of the primary objectives of social development was overcoming poverty. In order to achieve that goal, it was crucial to reduce extreme poverty by 50 per cent by the year 2015. The struggle against poverty was not an option; it was an imperative; it was the unfinished task of the twentieth century and the first priority of the twenty-first century. During the previous year, the United Nations had held important meetings during which the many facets of social development had been considered. The discussion held during the 40th session of the Commission for Social Development had emphasized the integration of economic and social policies so as to promote economic growth and full employment and to eradicate poverty. The commitment to reducing poverty, eliminating extreme poverty, and strengthening the relationship between equity and social integration called for concrete measures to reconcile economic growth, job creation and an active social policy within a suitable macroeconomic framework. The Rio Group valued the agreements reached at the International Conference on Financing for Development as an essential resource for attaining the goals and objectives of the World Summit for

Social Development. The San José Declaration, concluded in April by the Ministers for Foreign Relations of the Rio Group countries, urged the Governments of the region to give full effect to the Monterrey Consensus. The Ministers had been called upon to coordinate their efforts in the monitoring and implementation of those agreements. The Rio Group stressed the need for an integrated, global focus and for coherent policies promoting growth, development and the eradication of poverty as a means to achieve social development, one of the development objectives of the Millennium.

32. In the economic crisis affecting Latin America, the struggle against economic and social exclusion was a crucial factor in the consolidation of democracy and the construction of a better, safer world. It was important to continue to strengthen the role of the United Nations in social development, both internally, between its various bodies and between the latter and the Bretton Woods institutions. A new international financial structure would have to be designed, which would protect public assets such as human rights and the environment and would reduce poverty and inequality, by applying instruments and standards that would protect fragile economies. As affirmed in the San José Declaration and the Veracruz Act, poverty was a social injustice and a threat to the stability of nations; eliminating it was a global responsibility that required urgent attention. The many different causes of poverty should be taken into consideration in the formulation of public policies. The Rio Group would continue to strive to provide the most disadvantaged populations with greater access to quality education, decent work and comprehensive health services, another of the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development and during the twenty-fourth Special Session of the General Assembly on social development.

33. **Mr. Fonseca** (Brazil) speaking on behalf of the States members of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) and the associated countries Bolivia and Chile, said that the priorities defined in the context of the World Summit for Social Development and reiterated in Geneva two years ago had acquired even greater relevance and were the only viable way to achieve people-centred development, full respect for human rights and social equity. It was the primary responsibility of the State to formulate policies aimed at combating poverty and other social scourges and to

support civil society in its action to attain similar objectives.

34. The Governments of the MERCOSUR member countries and associated States had undertaken programmes for older persons, especially those living in poverty or want, had coordinated activities for the benefit of children and adolescents living in the street and had made efforts to improve the human condition and social situation of persons with disabilities.

35. Social development, however, could not be achieved without the commitment and collective effort of the international community. By implementing the results of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth Special Session of the General Assembly on social development, the targets set by Governments at other global conferences could also be met. It would also enable the international community to cope with the challenges of AIDS, racism and environmental degradation.

36. The brand-new International Centre on Poverty Reduction Policies, recently established in Brazil as a thematic unit of UNDP, would facilitate in-depth studies on the issue at the global level. It would also provide additional input for the elaboration of strategies and programmes to promote social inclusion and social justice for the disadvantaged.

37. The MERCOSUR members and associated countries welcomed the results of the recent conferences held under United Nations auspices in Durban, Monterrey and Johannesburg. They had led to the consolidation and refinement of principles and strategies for social integration and sustainable development, including the need to strengthen mechanisms for international cooperation and to seek efficient and democratic formulas governing public administration. The Political Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing adopted by the Second World Assembly on Ageing outlined strategies and programmes to deal with the most significant demographic phenomenon of the past century, namely increased longevity. By putting into practice the Madrid agenda, progress would be made in the implementation of the commitments made in Copenhagen and five years thereafter.

38. The social agenda of the MERCOSUR countries, Bolivia and Chile, laid down in the Charter of Buenos Aires on Social Commitment of June 2000, and the common social development goals established in the

pledge made in Gramado in September 2000, expressed the spirit and letter of the Copenhagen Programme of Action at the regional level. The Meeting of Ministers and Heads of Agencies Responsible for Social Development was the body which identified common challenges and priorities and implemented national and regional programmes to combat poverty and eradicate child labour. The MERCOSUR countries and Bolivia and Chile hoped that those initiatives would be supported by the international community, especially in respect of access to international markets, and to the United Nations system, particularly the Bretton Woods institutions.

39. **Mr. Amoros Nuñez** (Cuba) said that the recognition by the international community of the urgent need to solve the problems of poverty, unemployment and deteriorating health, among other ills that beset the developing world, had taken on renewed vigour. The World Summit for Social Development represented a fundamental milestone in that recognition. However, 1.2 billion people still lived in dire poverty. In three quarters of the world, injustice and social marginalization stemming from neoliberal globalization was being imposed whereas that phenomenon had yet to show a human face.

40. The industrialized world was evading its international commitments and refusing to share the wealth obtained by the plundering, exploitation and colonization of poorer countries. The steady tightening of official development assistance (ODA) provided by the industrialized countries was becoming more pronounced. Furthermore, the excessive external debt servicing obligations of the developing countries required them to allocate 18.6 per cent of their exports of goods and services to the payment of that debt. At the same time as the most powerful nations were demanding liberalization of the markets of developing countries, they were continuing to subsidize their own less competitive production. Moreover, investment flows to developing countries were drying up and those countries were forced to impose unreasonable structural adjustment policies which led to social ruin. While some would like to invalidate the international character of commitments in the area of social development and treat them as a domestic matter, the only option for creating an international environment where national activities could succeed and result in social progress lay in the implementation of and follow-up of those commitments.

41. Cuba had successfully implemented social development policies and strategies based on equity and social justice. One hundred per cent of its population had access to free health care and education. Priority was placed on the integral development of youth through the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Older persons had access to free medical care and hospitalization and were the primary beneficiaries of social security. Life expectancy at birth was 75.8 years. Cuba supported the activities for follow-up and implementation of the decisions taken at the Second World Assembly on Ageing. Priority was given to services for persons with disabilities, which included special education and rehabilitation as well as placement in jobs. The experience of Cuba demonstrated that social development was attainable even before economic development, through a more just and equitable distribution of wealth. Nevertheless, the economic, trade and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba restricted its scope for greater social progress. Promotion of international cooperation and solidarity were essential in achieving social development.

42. **Ms. Fusano** (Japan) said that the Government of Japan had been implementing the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth Special Session of the General Assembly. Japan faced the ageing of its population, which had the highest indicators of longevity in the world. Three quarters of older persons had no significant health problems, and their average income and savings were at the same level as that of younger generations. One out of every five were in the workforce, and half of all older persons were involved in group activities. That was largely due to the social security system, under which every citizen received basic insurance and a pension. However, given the rapid increase in the proportion of older persons in the population, which would reach 26 per cent by 2015, general principles concerning measures for the ageing of Japanese society had been established. Those measures called for reform of the health-care system, the long-term insurance system and pensions. A system would be created to promote re-employment and participation by healthy older persons in community activities, prevention of disease, improving health care and welfare services. Under another project being implemented middle-aged and older volunteers with specialized skills and knowledge were sent to developing countries to help them in

nation-building. Over the past decade, that project had sent 850 such older volunteers abroad. Japan was trying to create a society to which active and healthy older persons could continue to contribute, while ensuring a sustainable safety net for those in need. Japan's experience in that area could be useful to the international community.

43. Japan welcomed the results of the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, and would continue to participate actively in its work. At the fifty-eighth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Japan had sponsored a draft resolution declaring a new Decade of Disabled Persons (2003-2012), which had been adopted by consensus. In October, the Government of Japan had hosted a high-level international meeting to conclude the Decade of Disabled Persons. Several other conferences of non-governmental organizations had also been held. Japan welcomed and encouraged those efforts by non-governmental organizations, to which it provided financial and other support including contributions earmarked for the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability.

44. **Ms. Diaz Ceballos** (Mexico) said that her delegation associated itself fully with the statement by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Rio Group. The five-year review of the World Summit for Social Development had recognized the importance of placing human beings at the centre of sustainable development and establishing a favourable environment to eradicate poverty, promote employment and foster social integration. Those conclusions and the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development constituted an essential tool for applying new strategies which promoted social development programmes, supplemented national efforts and strengthened policies and programmes aimed at creating a just society for all, offering equal opportunities to men, women, youth, children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

45. The Commission for Social Development had an important role to play in ensuring fulfilment of agreements. Accordingly, it was essential to continue examining its methods of work and its decision-making process. It must be given a new infusion of energy to foster interactive and substantive dialogue and action-

oriented decisions. She also reaffirmed the view that it was important to facilitate the participation of civil society as a strategic partner in the work of United Nations bodies.

46. The Mexican Government was especially committed to the protection of the rights of various social groups and it had participated constructively in the work of the Commission for Social Development. At the same time, it had taken measures at the national level to meet its international obligations and would continue to work to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. She highlighted the importance of Economic and Social Council resolution 2002/7 of 24 July 2002, entitled "Comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities", which had been submitted by Mexico and adopted at the substantive session of the Council.

47. She expressed her gratitude to the Commission for Social Development and its Special Rapporteur for contributing to the work of the Ad Hoc Committee to prepare a broad and comprehensive international convention to protect and promote the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. She also acknowledged the work done by the Global Programme on Disability of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

48. Mexico was implementing a policy centred on creating and promoting a culture beneficial to older persons eliminating both discrimination in all its forms and negative stereotypes. It had recently adopted the Rights of Older Adults Act and had established the National Institute for Older Persons. It had also launched the Opportunity Programme, intended to facilitate and promote access by families to new services and programmes for job creation, income and savings, and the Programme for Women Heads of Household, which provided support to women heads of household living in extreme poverty in marginalized urban areas.

49. One of the activities in which Mexico was engaged in observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, was a National Meeting to help develop public policy and exchange models.

50. **Mr. N'Diaye** (Senegal) said that the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth Special Session of the General Assembly had

established eradication of poverty, promotion of full employment and social integration as priorities. However, the commitments made at Copenhagen were far from being fulfilled. Official development assistance had continued to decline, the debt burden had continued to increase and the countries of the South continued to face various obstacles that limited access for their exports to the markets of developed countries. Those situations were not favourable for sustainable development.

51. He was gratified that, like the various United Nations summits and special sessions of the General Assembly, the first International Forum for Social Development, held in February 2002, had highlighted the pressing need to combat poverty and find new sources for development financing.

52. In its resolution 56/116 of 19 December 2001, the General Assembly had proclaimed the period 2003-2012 as the United Nations Literacy Decade. The objectives of the Decade were in harmony with the Dakar Framework for Action, adopted at the World Education Forum held in Senegal in 2000. His delegation welcomed the report of UNESCO (A/57/2218) on the draft plan of action to achieve the objectives of the Decade. It stressed the priority groups, the basic areas of action, mobilization of resources and in particular, progress made towards achieving the objectives of the Decade.

53. In combating illiteracy, the essential actors were the local communities, non-governmental organizations, universities and research institutions and the private sector, and the issue of gender equality must be taken into account. By applying that strategy, the Government of Senegal had been able to make significant progress, especially in literacy among women.

54. His delegation welcomed the outcome of the Second World Assembly on Ageing and believed that the Madrid International Plan of Action should be included in the process of follow-up and monitoring of the results of the major United Nations conferences. The United Nations Programme on Ageing must be given the human and financial resources enabling it to fulfil its mandate.

55. His country was participating in the preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, to be observed in 2004. The Government of Senegal intended to promote equality between men and

women within the family and review some provisions of the Family Code to provide greater guarantees of women's rights.

56. Senegal believed that it was important to promote equal opportunity for all and to attack the causes of social injustice. Therefore, it encouraged the Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a draft convention for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities to intensify its efforts.

57. Senegal had participated actively in the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in 1998 in Lisbon, and in 2001 it had hosted the fourth session of the World Youth Forum at Dakar. It was important to ensure the regular follow-up to the outcome of those important international meetings. To that end, the Youth Unit of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the United Nations Secretariat must be reorganized, since it had a key role in the implementation of the Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy. The modalities, sources and strategies for financing the next session of the Forum should also be examined, including the possibility of financing it from the United Nations regular budget, and improving communication between the Youth Unit and global youth organizations.

58. He reiterated his Government's support for the initiative of the Secretary-General to create the Youth Employment Network. The experts responsible for the orientation courses on the establishment of that network had made important recommendations that the General Assembly should consider. In order to help to gather the support necessary for the network, his delegation had decided to submit a draft resolution on promoting youth employment (A/C.3/57/L.12), which it hoped would be supported by all Member States.

59. **Mr. Leigh** (United Nations Volunteers) recalled that in November 2000, on the occasion of the opening of the International Year of Volunteers, he had told the Committee that he hoped it would produce change in the perception of volunteerism and its contribution to national development. He had also underlined that volunteering was embedded in every culture and was a significant way that social groups participated in society.

60. The report of the Secretary-General (A/57/352) described the successes achieved, above all in its global scope: some 123 national and scores of local, regional and state committees were formed; the official

web site of the International Year of Volunteers had received over 9 million visitors; there was heightened recognition of the role of volunteerism in development resulting from a wide range of activities in every region; important progress had been made in measuring volunteer contributions; legislative frameworks for volunteering had been put into place; infrastructure to support volunteerism had been established; and networks had been forged among all the stakeholders.

61. The Year had also highlighted the relevance of volunteerism to achieving the goals set out in the Millennium Declaration and other major conferences and summits, and to fulfilling development commitments made by Governments. A key factor was the voluntary participation of local populations, both through traditional systems of mutual aid and self-help and through other forms of service and activism.

62. He expressed the hope that many Member States would participate in the consideration in the General Assembly of the results of the International Year of Volunteers, share their experiences and report on their plans to build on the results obtained. He also hoped that every country would agree to sponsor the draft resolution on follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers (A/57/L.8) submitted by Brazil.

63. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan) said that social development, which could not be separated from economic development, could only be achieved in an environment of peace and stability. Much remained to be done in that area, despite the efforts of Governments and the international community at various levels to execute the commitments made at the Copenhagen Summit. Social development was first and foremost a national responsibility requiring stronger political commitment on the national and international levels. Her delegation had considered in detail the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth Special Session of the General Assembly (A/57/L.15), which stressed the importance of poverty eradication as one of the primary obligations contracted at the Copenhagen Summit and the major challenge facing humanity.

64. The five-year review of the implementation of the decisions taken at the Copenhagen Summit had emphasized the importance of incorporating the target of halving the number of people living in poverty by 2015 in international public policy. That objective had

become one of the targets common to major United Nations conferences.

65. Social development could not be achieved without a collective effort by the international community and unless the least-developed countries were offered the assistance they needed for their development. Her delegation therefore welcomed General Assembly resolution 56/227 of 24 December 2001, establishing the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, and hoped that the High Representative would receive the support required to fulfil his mandate.

66. The problem of external debt must be addressed effectively and impartially with the aim of reducing the debt and debt servicing burden and their negative impact on social development in debtor countries. The enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative must also be activated. The reform of the international economic system must continue and the transparency and stability of the international monetary system must be guaranteed, by making the Bretton Woods institutions more democratic, enabling them to respond more effectively to the challenges of development in the context of international financial integration.

67. She reiterated the need to build the capacity of developing countries, in particular the least developed among them, to compete in international markets and meet the challenges of globalization by improving their infrastructure, transfer of technology and human resources development. Poverty and inequality between and within countries could not be eradicated without remedying the precarious condition of infrastructures, especially in Africa. She hoped that the international community would cooperate in infrastructure development and help to create an environment conducive to economic development.

68. In order for countries to realize their right to development, an inalienable human right, economic sanctions and unilateral economic measures must be discontinued and the right of everyone to food and medicine guaranteed in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and the other occupied Arab territories must be ended, as well as such practices of the Israeli occupying forces as

killings and expulsion of Palestinians, attacks against the premises of the Palestinian Authority, demolition of houses and destruction of infrastructure, which represented a serious violation of international law and, in particular, of international human rights instruments.

69. Despite the consequences of the sanctions which had been imposed on it, Sudan had made great efforts in the areas of social development and had adopted an active strategy to combat poverty which included a variety of programmes.

70. Cooperation must be intensified in combating diseases like malaria and in addressing the AIDS pandemic. With respect to older persons, her delegation welcomed the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing and stressed the importance of implementing the International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002.

71. Sudan had made major efforts to prepare for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, in 2004. In that connection, her delegation felt that the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General would be helpful in taking effective measures during the remainder of the preparatory period.

72. **Mr. Dube** (Botswana) speaking on behalf of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), said that poverty eradication remained a major challenge to SADC, since over 14 million inhabitants of the region lived in absolute poverty, mainly in rural areas. The Governments of SADC were implementing policies to promote investment for change in rural areas, mobilize national and foreign resources to finance poverty reduction strategies and forge alliances with the private sector and non-governmental organizations to provide services to the poor. Despite these and other new initiatives like the New Partnership for Africa's Development, many of the countries of the region had not yet made significant progress in social development, for various reasons related to HIV/AIDS, which remained the most serious threat to social and economic progress in SADC, conflicts and climate change.

73. The severe drought gripping the region threatened the lives of over 8 million people, and therefore, although he welcomed the assistance given to date, he urged Member States to respond to the appeals of the

World Food Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

74. With regard to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the SADC Governments had taken individual and collective measures to promote change in sexual behaviour, the use of condoms, abstinence, prevention of mother-to-child transmission and to supply medicines to patients. Since the World Summit for Social Development, the economies of the SADC countries had experienced slight growth, but they continued to require assistance from the United Nations and donor countries since regrettably, there had been only a slight increase in direct foreign investment offset by a decline in official development assistance.

75. In order to promote full and productive employment in the SADC region, those Governments had made a commitment to provide education for all as soon as possible and had made efforts to promote universal access to high quality education as well.

76. SADC supported the Political Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing and recalled that in the SADC countries, older persons carried the burden of caring for the sick and for their grandchildren orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

77. **Mr. Tamir** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he regretted that the representative of Egypt had decided to refer in his statement to the situation currently being experienced in the territories. It was truly to be deplored that one of Israel's main neighbours had decided to divert attention from the important work before the Committee in that way. Egypt had forgotten to mention, however, that Palestine had left the negotiating table three years earlier, and that it had since been fully engaged in suicidal acts of terrorism and general killings. Israel was not opposed to the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, but it did oppose suicide attacks. Dialogue and cooperation were the only means to solve the remaining problems.

78. **Mr. Fahmy** (Egypt), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he understood the feelings of the representative of Israel and that he would have said the same if he were the only one present in the room who represented an occupying force. He had decided to devote most of his statement to the situation in Palestine because that was his right, given that social development was a broad concept which did not

exclude basic rights and fundamental freedoms. In any case, countries didn't have to ask permission to discuss any topic, if they considered it important. The Third Committee was discussing social development, which included fundamental freedoms and human rights. Israel had said that the Palestinians had left the negotiating table, abandoning the dialogue, but it should ask itself what dialogue it was referring to and what the Palestinians had accomplished in the past six years. The answer to the last question would be more people dead, more blockades, more unemployment and more poverty. His delegation hoped that the day would come when Israel would truly believe that Israeli blood was no more pure or precious than that of Palestinians and that Palestinian children had as much right to live as Israelis.

79. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the reply of the representative of Israel was insulting to her delegation and to all the members of the Third Committee, who were perfectly aware of the situation in Palestine and Jerusalem and the history of Ariel Sharon. She reiterated that Palestine condemned all forms of terrorism. It was surprising to find the Palestinians being accused of abandoning dialogue and engaging in indiscriminate murder, since it was well known that the tragic situation in the occupied territories was the result of the oppressive measures and tactics of Israel, which had committed the most atrocious crimes in modern history against the Palestinian people and which practised State terrorism. She wondered how a Government could make accusations of murder when its Prime Minister was Ariel Sharon, himself a terrorist whose history, from Sabra and Shatila to Jenin, was known by everybody. The Palestinians were fighting to defend their freedom and independence and on principle, they condemned any type of terrorism, considering that it constituted a violation of all fundamental rights and principles of international law and human rights instruments. They condemned terrorism because they were suffering from it.

80. **The Chairman** suggested that an additional meeting should be added on Wednesday, 6 November, in the morning to hear the presentation of the reports of three Special Rapporteurs on questions relating to human rights.

81. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.